United Nations A/C.3/64/L.30/Rev.1

General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
11 November 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session

Third Committee

Agenda item 69 (b)

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

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The right to food

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming all previous resolutions and decisions on the right to food adopted within the framework of the United Nations,

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Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[1] which provides that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for her or his health and well-being, including food, the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition[2] and the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[3] in particular Millennium Development Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015,

Recalling also the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[4] in which the fundamental right of every person to be free from hunger is recognized,

Bearing in mind the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action[5] and the Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later, adopted in Rome on 13 June 2002,[6]

Reaffirming the concrete recommendations contained in the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in November 2004,[7]

Reaffirming also that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that they must be treated globally, in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis,

Reaffirming further that a peaceful, stable and enabling political, social and economic environment, at both the national and the international levels, is the essential foundation that will enable States to give adequate priority to food security and poverty eradication,

Reiterating, as in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later, that food should not be used as an instrument of political or economic pressure, and reaffirming in this regard the importance of international cooperation and solidarity, as well as the necessity of refraining from unilateral measures that are not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that endanger food security,

Convinced that each State must adopt a strategy consistent with its resources and capacities to achieve its individual goals in implementing the recommendations contained in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action and, at the same time, cooperate regionally and internationally in order to organize collective solutions to global issues of food

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[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] *Report of the World Food Conference, Rome, 5-16 November 1974* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.II.A.3), chap. I.

[3] See resolution 55/2.

[4] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[5] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the World Food Summit, 13-17 November 1996* (WFS 96/REP), part one, appendix.

[6] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the World Food Summit: five years later, 10-13 June 2002*, part one, appendix; see also A/57/499, annex.

[7] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Session, Rome, 22-27 November 2004* (CL 127/REP), appendix D; see also E/CN.4/2005/131, annex.

security in a world of increasingly interlinked institutions, societies and economies where coordinated efforts and shared responsibilities are essential,

Recognizing the complex character of the global food crisis, in which the right to adequate food is threatened to be violated on a massive scale, as a combination of several major factors, such as the global financial and economic crisis, environmental degradation, desertification and the impacts of global climate change, as well as natural disasters and the lack in many countries of the appropriate technology, investment and capacity-building necessary to confront its impact, particularly in developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States,

Resolved to act to ensure that the human rights perspective is taken into account at the national, regional and international levels in measures to address the current global food crisis,

Expressing its deep concern at the number and scale of natural disasters, diseases and pests and their increasing impact in recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and livelihood and threatened agricultural production and food security, in particular in developing countries,

Stressing the importance of reversing the continuing decline of official development assistance devoted to agriculture, both in real terms and as a share of total official development assistance,

Recognizing the importance of the protection and preservation of agrobiodiversity, guaranteeing food security and the right to food for all,

Recognizing also the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as the key United Nations agency for rural and agricultural development and its work in supporting the efforts of Member States to achieve the full realization of the right to food, including through its provision of technical assistance to developing countries in support of the implementation of national priority frameworks,

Taking note of the final Declaration adopted at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on 10 March 2006,[*]

Acknowledging the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis established by the Secretary-General, and supporting the Secretary-General in his continuing efforts in this regard, including continued engagement with Member States and the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the right to food,

1. *Reaffirms* that hunger constitutes an outrage and a violation of human dignity and therefore requires the adoption of urgent measures at the national, regional and international levels for its elimination;

2. *Also reaffirms* the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, so as to be able to fully develop and maintain his or her physical and mental capacities;

[*] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 7–10 March 2006* (C 2006/REP), appendix G.

3. *Considers it intolerable* that, as estimated by the United Nations Children's Fund, more than one third of the children who die every year before the age of 5 do so from hunger-related illness, and that, as estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the number of people who are undernourished has grown to about 1.02 billion worldwide, including as a result of the global food crisis, while, according to the latter organization, the planet could produce enough food to feed everyone around the world;

4. *Expresses its concern* that women and girls are disproportionately affected by hunger, food insecurity and poverty, in part as a result of gender inequality and discrimination, that in many countries, girls are twice as likely as boys to die from malnutrition and preventable childhood diseases and that it is estimated that almost twice as many women as men suffer from malnutrition;

5. *Encourages* all States to take action to address gender inequality and discrimination against women, in particular where it contributes to the malnutrition of women and girls, including measures to ensure the full and equal realization of the right to food and ensuring that women have equal access to resources, including income, land and water and their ownership, as well as full and equal access to education, science and technology, to enable them to feed themselves and their families;

6. *Encourages* the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the right to food to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective in the fulfilment of his mandate, and encourages the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and all other United Nations bodies and mechanisms addressing the right to food and food insecurity to integrate a gender perspective into their relevant policies, programmes and activities;

7. *Reaffirms* the need to ensure that programmes delivering safe and nutritious food are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities;

8. *Encourages* all States to take steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right to food, including steps to promote the conditions for everyone to be free from hunger and, as soon as possible, to enjoy fully the right to food, and to create and adopt national plans to combat hunger;

9. *Recognizes* the advances reached through South-South cooperation in developing countries and regions in connection with food security and the development of agricultural production for the full realization of the right to food;

10. *Stresses* that improving access to productive resources and public investment in rural development are essential for eradicating hunger and poverty, in particular in developing countries, including through the promotion of investments in appropriate small-scale irrigation and water management technologies in order to reduce vulnerability to droughts;

11. *Recognizes* that 80 per cent of hungry people live in rural areas and 50 per cent are small-scale farm-holders, and that these people are especially vulnerable to food insecurity, given the increasing cost of inputs and the fall in farm incomes; that access to land, water, seeds and other natural resources is an increasing challenge for poor producers; that sustainable and gender-sensitive agricultural policies are important tools for promoting land and agrarian reform, rural credit and insurance, technical assistance and other associated measures to

achieve food security and rural development; and that support by States for small farmers, fishing communities and local enterprises is a key element for food security and the provision of the right to food;

12. *Stresses* the importance of fighting hunger in rural areas, including through national efforts supported by international partnerships to stop desertification and land degradation and through investments and public policies that are specifically appropriate to the risk of drylands, and in this regard calls for the full implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;[9]

13. *Urges* States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to consider becoming States Parties to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as a matter of priority;

14. *Recalls* the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[10] and acknowledges that many indigenous organizations and representatives of indigenous peoples have expressed in different forums their deep concerns over the obstacles and challenges they face for the full enjoyment of the right to food, and calls upon States to take special actions to combat the root causes of the disproportionately high level of hunger and malnutrition among indigenous peoples and the continuous discrimination against them;

15. *Notes* the need to further examine various concepts such as, inter alia, "food sovereignty" and their relation with food security and the right to food, bearing in mind the need to avoid any negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to food for all people at all times;

16. *Requests* all States and private actors, as well as international organizations within their respective mandates, to take fully into account the need to promote the effective realization of the right to food for all, including in the ongoing negotiations in different fields;

17. *Recognizes* the need to strengthen national commitment as well as international assistance, upon the request of and in cooperation with the affected countries, towards the full realization and protection of the right to food, and in particular to develop national protection mechanisms for people forced to leave their homes and land because of hunger or humanitarian emergencies affecting the enjoyment of the right to food;

18. *Stresses* the need to make efforts to mobilize and optimize the allocation and utilization of technical and financial resources from all sources, including external debt relief for developing countries, and to reinforce national actions to implement sustainable food security policies;

19. *Calls for* the early conclusion and a successful, development-oriented outcome of the Doha Round of trade negotiations of the World Trade Organization as a contribution to creating international conditions that permit the full realization of the right to food;

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[9] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[10] Resolution 61/295, annex.

20. *Stresses* that all States should make all efforts to ensure that their international policies of a political and economic nature, including international trade agreements, do not have a negative impact on the right to food in other countries;

21. *Recalls* the importance of the New York Declaration on Action against Hunger and Poverty, and recommends the continuation of efforts aimed at identifying additional sources of financing for the fight against hunger and poverty;

22. *Recognizes* that the promises made at the World Food Summit in 1996 to halve the number of persons who are undernourished are not being fulfilled, while recognizing the efforts of Member States in this regard, and invites once again all international financial and development institutions, as well as the relevant United Nations agencies and funds, to give priority to and provide the necessary funding to realize the aim of halving by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, as well as the right to food as set out in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security[3] and the United Nations Millennium Declaration;[2]

23. *Reaffirms* that integrating food and nutritional support, with the goal that all people at all times will have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, is part of a comprehensive effort to improve public health, including the response to the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases;

24. *Urges* States to give adequate priority in their development strategies and expenditures to the realization of the right to food;

25. *Stresses* the importance of international cooperation and development assistance, both as an effective contribution to the expansion and improvement of agriculture and its environmental sustainability, food production, breeding projects on diversity of crops and livestock, institutional innovations such as community seed banks, farmer field schools and seed fairs, as well as to the provision of humanitarian food assistance in activities related to emergency situations, for the realization of the right to food and the achievement of sustainable food security, while recognizing that each country has the primary responsibility for ensuring the implementation of national programmes and strategies in this regard;

26. *Also stresses* that States parties to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights[11] should consider implementing that agreement in a manner supportive of food security, while mindful of the obligation of Member States to promote and protect the right to food;

27. *Calls upon* Member States, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders to support national efforts aimed at responding rapidly to the food crises currently occurring across Africa, and expresses its deep concern that funding shortfalls are forcing the World Food Programme to cut operations across different regions, including Southern Africa;

28. *Invites* all relevant international organizations, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to continue to promote policies and projects

[11] See *Legal Instruments Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994* (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994-7).

that have a positive impact on the right to food, to ensure that partners respect the right to food in the implementation of common projects, to support strategies of Member States aimed at the fulfilment of the right to food and to avoid any actions that could have a negative impact on the realization of the right to food;

29. *Takes note with appreciation* of the interim report of the Special Rapporteur;[12]

30. *Supports* the realization of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, as extended by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 6/2 of 27 September 2007;[13]

31. *Requests* the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide all the necessary human and financial resources for the effective fulfilment of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur;

32. *Welcomes* the work already done by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in promoting the right to adequate food, in particular its General Comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food (article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights),[14] in which the Committee affirmed, inter alia, that the right to adequate food is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the human person and is indispensable for the fulfilment of other human rights enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights, and is also inseparable from social justice, requiring the adoption of appropriate economic, environmental and social policies, at both the national and the international levels, oriented to the eradication of poverty and the fulfilment of all human rights for all;

33. *Recalls* General Comment No. 15 (2002) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to water (articles 11 and 12 of the Covenant),[15] in which the Committee noted, inter alia, the importance of ensuring sustainable water resources for human consumption and agriculture in realization of the right to adequate food;

34. *Reaffirms* that the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in November 2004, represent a practical tool to promote the realization of the right to food for all, contribute to the achievement of food security and thus provide an additional instrument in the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;

35. *Welcomes* the continued cooperation of the High Commissioner, the Committee and the Special Rapporteur, and encourages them to continue their cooperation in this regard;

36. *Calls upon* all Governments to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur in his task, to supply all necessary information requested by him and to give serious consideration to responding favourably to the requests of the Special

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[12] See A/64/170.

[13] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 53* (A/63/53), chap. I, sect. A.

[14] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 2* and corrigendum (E/2000/22 and Corr.1), annex V.

[15] Ibid., *2003, Supplement No. 2* (E/2003/22), annex IV.

Rapporteur to visit their countries to enable him to fulfil his mandate more effectively;

37. *Requests* the Special Rapporteur to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the implementation of the present resolution and to continue his work, including by examining the emerging issues with regard to the realization of the right to food within his existing mandate;

38. *Invites* Governments, relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, treaty bodies, civil society actors and non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector, to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur in the fulfilment of his mandate, inter alia, through the submission of comments and suggestions on ways and means of realizing the right to food;

39. *Decides* to continue the consideration of the question at its sixty-fifth session under the item entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights".